

**EC says examining proportional representation model in reform efforts**  
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**By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

KUALA LUMPUR, June 8 — The Elections Commission (EC) is now studying the feasibility of implementing a mixed-member proportional (MMP) representation system similar to New Zealand's in order to improve Malaysia's voting process, deputy chairman Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar revealed today.

Like most Commonwealth countries, New Zealand had first adopted the first-pass-the-post system but has since utilised the MMP system to address some of the defects facing the former model, including its susceptibility to bias.

"We are now studying the New Zealand concept; they started with the first-pass-the-post system but now they are using the proportional representation system.

"Maybe we can have a mixed system like in New Zealand," he told a forum on the redelineation of constituencies organised by Bar Council.

Wan Ahmad had previously denied claims that the first-past-the-post voting system practised in Malaysia will keep the ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) in power forever, insisting that it was among the best electoral systems in the world.

Academics have said malapportionment — unequally-sized constituencies — and gerrymandering — manipulation of electoral boundaries — led to one rural vote being worth six urban votes in the May 5 general election that BN won despite losing the popular vote to Pakatan Rakyat (PR) opposition pact.

"This first-past-the-post (system), it's not until forever that BN will win. This first-past-the-post is a simple system where (there's a) contest for seats in an area," Wan Ahmad previously told The Malaysian Insider in an exclusive interview.

"Because of this first past the post, BN did not get two-thirds majority in PRU13 (13th general election). Because of this first past the post, the Selangor PR government won with two-thirds majority in the state assembly," he added.

Today Wan Ahmad again defended the model as "the most beautiful thing" as it ensured constituencies could be well-served.

"With the proportional representation system, you don't have this (constituency)," he said.

But the EC deputy chairman said the polls regulator was open to feedback from stakeholders on how it can best improve the voting process to ensure fairness, including looking into the MMP model.

"Honestly, I don't think we are ready to change it immediately... but maybe the mixed system. Even in New Zealand, they don't change it completely," he said.

Universiti Malaya Centre for Democracy and Elections (UMCEDEL) deputy director Amer Saifude had told a forum recently that BN will continue its rule as long as the first-past-the-post system is used in Malaysia despite a redelineation exercise.

The academic had said the expected redelineation of constituencies by year-end would benefit Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's coalition and even help it improve upon its Election 2013 performance.

Despite winning only 47 per cent of the popular vote in the May 5 election, Najib saw his coalition keeping power with a simple majority, bagging 133 federal seats against PR's 89.

Previously, Wan Ahmad said those who feel the first-past-the-post voting system is unfair do not understand the electoral system in Malaysia.

"Australia, first past the post. New Zealand first past the post mixed a bit with the proportional representation (PR) system. India, the largest democratic country in the world, 800 million voters, first past the post," he said.

Opposition leaders and election reform group Bersih 2.0 are now calling for the resignation of all current EC members as a condition to polls reform after it was accused of failing to uphold its duty to ensure a clean Election 2013.

Wan Ahmad has described the allegations as "misguided", claiming that most of his critics are unaware of the technicalities of the issue and of the EC's constant effort to address the problems facing Malaysia's election system.

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